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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 001961

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TAGS: [TPHY](#) [SENV](#) [TRGY](#) [TSPL](#) [PARM](#) [ENRG](#) [KGIT](#) [KNNP](#) [KSCA](#)  
OSCI, IZ  
SUBJECT: IRAQ'S NEW ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION

REF: A. 08 BAGHDAD 3143  
[1](#)B. UNVIE VIENNA 281

Classified By: DCM Robert Ford for reasons 1.4 (b, d, e, f, g, h.).

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraph 9.

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SUMMARY  
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[1](#)2. (C) The Council of Ministers (CoM) signed an order in April 2009 establishing the Iraqi National Atomic Energy Commission, an inter-ministry commission mandated to provide coordination and advice regarding all nuclear issues. Minister of Science and Technology (MoST) Ra'id Fahmi Jahid said the commission is considering nuclear energy from a long-term perspective only and has made no decisions or recommendations. Noting that UNSCR 707 could possibly remain in effect for some time to come, fully restricting Iraq from working with nuclear energy technologies, Minister Fahmi quipped, "707 can be interpreted in many ways--there are big margins, and that's where we are working." Minister Fahmi said that recent Iraqi press reports based on an interview in which he claimed Iraq had decided to build a reactor were inaccurate and he has requested a retraction. Embassy believes it is likely Iraq will begin importing and developing nuclear energy technologies as soon as UNSCR 707 restrictions are removed. Please see paragraph 9, action request. End Summary.

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IRAQ'S NEW ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION  
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[1](#)3. (SBU) Minister of Science and Technology (MoST) Ra'id Fahmi Jahid told EmbOffs on 9 July that the Council of Ministers (CoM) signed an order in April 2009 establishing an inter-ministry commission called the "Iraqi National Commission for Atomic Energy." Created on the recommendation of Minister Fahmi, the commission has no authority to make decisions and no budget, simply a mandate to act as a forum for inter-ministry discussion and advice to the Prime Minister on all nuclear issues. "When the Minister of Electricity told the press several months ago in France that Iraq wanted to pursue nuclear energy, he had no clue about United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 707," Fahmi said. "This commission will allow us to coordinate our policy in an informed and inclusive way." Minister Fahmi claimed that perhaps the commission was poorly named given that its focus is on nuclear issues in general, not just energy. Dr. Talib Ebrahim, MoST Director General for the Materials Science and a member of the commission, said that the commission's present objectives are to coordinate a way

ahead on non-energy related issues, such as health, agricultural, and industrial applications of nuclear technologies. (Note: In September 2008, Minister Fahmi told the Embassy that Iraq was not/not considering developing nuclear power (ref A). End note.)

14. (SBU) Stating Iraq has the right to develop nuclear energy "just like Jordan and the UAE," Minister Fahmi said that the commission is considering nuclear energy from a long-term perspective only and has made no decisions or recommendations. UNSCR 707 prohibits Iraq from working with nuclear energy at this time, but it is only prudent to plan ahead, he said. A reactor program would require 600-1000 highly trained personnel, of which Iraq has very few. A viable commercial reactor would take 15-20 years to implement and require an enormous amount of resources. Economic viability, site selection, human resources, all of this takes time, he said. Site selection, human resources, all of this takes an immense amount of inter-ministry coordination, he continued. When asked, he said that Iraq was not reaching out to expatriate Iraqi nuclear scientists in particular, but continues to encourage Iraqi specialists from all fields to contribute to Iraq's reconstruction.

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WORKING IN THE MARGINS OF UNSCR 707  
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15. (C) Noting that UNSCR 707 could possibly remain in effect for some time to come, fully restricting Iraq from working with nuclear energy technologies, Minister Fahmi quipped, "707 can be interpreted in many ways--there are big margins, and that's where we are working." Underscoring Iraq's

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ambitions to have UNSCR 707 restrictions lifted as soon as possible, he quickly followed up, "the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is quite happy with our cooperation on all nuclear issues." Minister Fahmi claimed that the Government of Iraq had signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Additional Protocol (AP) and was simply waiting for Parliament to ratify it, a prerequisite to having 707 lifted, he said (ref B). (Note. Iraq signed the AP in October 2009, but has not yet submitted their declaration to the IAEA bringing the AP into force. End note.)

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MINISTER CLAIMS PRESS REPORTS WERE NOT ACCURATE  
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16. (SBU) Minister Fahmi said that recent Iraqi press reports (Buratha News Agency, June 15 and Al Bayyna Newspaper, June 16) based on an interview with Minister Fahmi claiming Iraq had decided to build a reactor were inaccurate and he has requested a retraction. "The press filled in some blanks with things I did not say," claimed Minister Fahmi. Claims of U.S. support for the commission were also published out of context, he said, clarifying that what he meant was that the United States supports several other GOI nuclear-related activities, such as clean-up of Tuwaitha Nuclear Complex and cooperation with the Iraq Scientist Engagement Program.

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TEXT OF THE GOI ORDER ESTABLISHING THE COMMISSION  
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17. (SBU) MoST provided EmbOffs a copy of CoM Order 53 which established the Atomic Energy Commission. The order assigns 14 GOI members by name to the commission from eight ministries (including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), the Prime Minister's and Deputy Prime Ministers' Offices, and the Iraq Radioactive Source Regulatory Authority. The Commission works under the supervision of MoST and is headed by MoST Deputy Minister Fouad Mousawi. The order also states the commission's responsibilities are:

- a) Propose Iraq's policies in the field of peaceful uses of atomic energy and the implementation mechanisms.
- b) Coordinate national efforts in the field of peaceful uses of atomic energy.
- c) Coordinate joint cooperation between Iraq and international, regional, and Arab organizations in the field of atomic energy.
- d) Propose a national comprehensive program for developing specialized cadre in this field.
- e) Recommend the approval of national activities and projects in the field of peaceful uses of atomic energy.
- f) Provide scientific and technical advice and expertise to decision makers concerning all peaceful applications of atomic energy.

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COMMENT  
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18. (C) Noting Iraq's loose usage of the term "Atomic Energy" to include non-energy related nuclear technologies (e.g., cancer therapy, mine detection, industrial sterilization), even the commission's limited focus on nuclear energy is disturbing given Iraq's history with nuclear technology. Iraq's three previous nuclear reactors (the 40-megawatt Osiraq Materials Testing Reactor, the 800-kilowatt Isis Research Reactor, and the five-megawatt IRT-5000 Research Reactor) still lay in bombed heaps in Tuwaitha Nuclear Complex. As the GOI has placed a hiring freeze on MoST and reduced its already small budget, the Minister may feel MoST's political future is in question and is using the nuclear issue to try and create a secure role for the ministry. Considering together the claimed misquotes from the news interview, the written order's focus on nuclear energy, Iraq's history with nuclear technologies, and MoST's search for a mission, the Embassy believes it is likely Iraq will begin importing and developing nuclear energy technologies as soon as UNSCR 707 restrictions are removed.

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ACTION REQUEST  
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19. (SBU) Embassy requests demarche instructions to inform the GOI of the United States Government's policy regarding Iraq's development of nuclear energy.  
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